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ABSTRACT

Recommendations for a new emphasis in rural education have arisen out of what is seen as a crisis in education itself and an awareness of the intractabilities of the unemployment problem for youth, urban, and educated populations. Basic education (defined as programs designed to teach primarily rural children and youth the basic knowledge considered relevant to everyday life, encompassing literacy, numeracy, and the knowledge required to run a household and bring up a family) is increasingly being considered as an effective alternative to traditional primary education both on grounds of equity and its potential socioeconomic benefits. In general, there is a wide diversity of nonformal education programs which have been implemented throughout the developing world over many decades. Examination of exemplary nonformal education programs in various developing nations (the dual primary-basic education in the Upper Volta is a case in point) reveals that, in general, nonformal education programs can provide a means of reducing inequalities inherent in earlier patterns of educational investment and that they can play important political, social, and economic roles in affecting the pattern of peoples' lives. Examples also make it clear that the establishment of dual systems can serve to institutionalize present inequalities. Hence, the design of alternative programs must coordinate the aims and objectives of the planners with those of the recipients. (JC)

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SOME ISSUES IN RURAL EDUCATION: EQUITY, EFFICIENCY AND EMPLOYMENT

C. Colclough and J. Hallak

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I. INTRODUCTION

Throughout the sixties the main problems in the education sector of developing societies as perceived by planners, politicians and theorists, related primarily to the challenge of producing sufficient educated and trained people to promote a rapid localisation of jobs, and to sustain the high rates of modern sector economic growth which were believed to be necessary if development was to occur. The policy prescriptions which followed from this emphasis involved a dramatic expansion of post-primary educational institutions which were expensive in terms of physical structures, equipment and trained teachers, which dramatically increased the overall budgetary expenditures upon education, particularly in the poorest countries(1), and yet which affected only a tiny minority of the populations of the developing world. The preoccupation during this period was with the expansion rather than the change of existing educational systems, and since existing educational technologies were so expensive, a large proportion of available resources were directed towards educating and certificating a privileged minority.

This emphasis upon the higher levels of the formal education system was both understandable and inevitable, particularly when, for those countries which achieved independence during this period, successful accelerated localisation programmes were critically necessary for political reasons. The problems of supplying the economy with the trained manpower in the quantity and of the quality it needs are and will remain crucially important to most countries in the developing world. But, arising from the experience of the last decade, two significant realisations have occurred which are at present shifting the focus of interest with regard to educational policy.

The first of these is the realisation that the earlier conventional association (identification, even) of economic growth with development was at best an over-simplification, at worst positively misleading. The healthy

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(1) Between 1960 and 1970, though there is considerable variation between the countries concerned, second-level enrolment ratios for 29 countries with per capita incomes of less than US$120 doubled from about 8 to 16 per cent of the eligible age-group, whilst enrolment ratios at primary level rose from about 40 to 65 per cent of the age-group. For these same countries government spending on education expressed as a proportion of the annual budget rose on average from 6.7 per cent to 13.2 per cent over the same period. See Tables 2, 3 and Annex 9 of Education Sector Working Paper, World Bank, December 1974.

rates of economic growth achieved by many poor countries have been heavily determined by movements within the relatively capital intensive modern sector, whilst traditional agricultural production, upon which most people depend, has stagnated. It has now become widely accepted, therefore, that whatever the achieved rate of economic growth, it is not possible to say much about whether a society is developing unless we know what has been happening to employment, to poverty and the distribution of incomes, and to broader indicators of social welfare, such as health and nutrition. The movement of these variables in a given direction is not unambiguously correlated with a high rate of economic growth. This, therefore, throws emphasis away from the growth concept, and towards examining each of these indicators in their own right. Though economic growth is still part of the scaffolding of development, it is no longer confused with the building itself.

Secondly, in almost all developing countries(1) it is now clear that for a good many years even the majority of people who will represent, annually, additions to the size of the domestic labour force cannot be absorbed into regular wage or salaried employment. The social benefits, then, of directing a major proportion of education resources towards a fairly small proportion of children in the age-group, most of whom will be absorbed by the formal(2) sector are not as clear as earlier growth theories supposed - at least within the planning time-horizon which it seems sensible for most countries to adopt.

Together, this wider view of the meaning of development, and the failure of economic growth to prevent an increasing labour surplus, imply a need to give evaluations of educational expenditures a welfare focus and more particularly to analyse and re-direct such expenditures in the light of the needs and production possibilities of a predominantly rural population.

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(1) The only known exceptions are provided by those countries in which international migration of unskilled workers is very significant, such as is found, for example, in Southern Africa and in some island economies.

(2) Conventional distinctions between modern and traditional, formal and informal are unsatisfactory, and the dividing lines within the two dichotomies are not synonymous. In this paper we use the words modern and traditional when we wish to emphasise differences in techniques of production, and the words formal and informal when we wish to draw attention to differences in employment conditions and labour practices.

II. CONSTRAINTS ON THE EXPANSION OF THE EXISTING SYSTEM

The first question that needs to be tackled concerns whether governments can effectively address this problem by using primarily the existing school and university system. At present the private rates of return to secondary and higher education, particularly in the smaller and poorer countries, are so high that there is strong political pressure for more secondary schooling, and for much wider access to it. Though it is anticipated that income differentials on the basis of education will become narrower during the next decade, either through direct government action or through the market process as secondary education continues to expand at a rate faster than the annual rate of job creation(1), there will remain strong pressures upon governments to make access to secondary and higher education a much fairer process than is currently the case. Irrespective of the desirability or otherwise of further expanding secondary and tertiary education structures with their associated academic curricula, their implicit values and social effects, the very high financial costs involved will prevent their becoming universally available for many decades. But an aim which most countries have adopted, both with a wish to equalise access to these levels of education and to be pursued as an end in itself, is a target of universal primary education (UPE) within the not too distant future.

UPE alone obviously does not guarantee equality of access to higher levels of the system because of the tremendous regional differences in the quality or kinds of teaching given, because of inequalities in the provision of materials and equipment in different schools and areas, because the examination system favours the children of the upper classes, and because of, often, the medium of instruction and the lingua franca being different for the poorer and usually rural parts of the population. Nevertheless, given greater equity in the distribution of these resources and methods, UPE would be a step towards achieving equity in the selection process.

The prospects for a rapid movement towards UPE throughout the developing world, however, are not good. Work completed by Unesco suggests that the number of children in the 5-14 age-group who never attend school or who drop

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(1) On the reasons for this view, with respect to Africa, at least, see Richard Jolly and Christopher Colclough, "African manpower plans : an evaluation", in International Labour Review, Vol. 106, Nos. 2-3, August-September 1972.

out before completion is likely to increase by as much as 30 per cent during the next ten years.(1) Though this means that enrolment ratios will at least be keeping ahead of population growth, more rapid progress than this would - particularly in the poorest countries - represent a tremendous burden on resources at present cost levels. The political realities imply that costs are difficult to reduce. Teachers salaries, for example, which represent the major part of recurrent costs, could not be affected in isolation from other groups and professions in society. It is this kind of argument that has led some observers, and one major aid donor (IBRD) to advocate alternative strategies from that provided by the schools to achieve wider participation in the educational process.

A large body of other critics have recently been advocating the search for alternatives - not on the grounds that the resource constraint will prevent universal access to primary schooling for many years, but rather on the grounds that primary education is not a particularly helpful or relevant experience for people who do not progress to higher levels of the educational system. It is argued that the content of primary education is irrevocably tied to requirements and values dictated by the large-scale formal sector of the economy, and that what goes on inside schools is influenced to a tremendous extent by the certification needs of the small minority of students who will progress into secondary school, and hardly at all by the needs of the majority who will not. In short, it is argued that the pull of the employment market and its associated demands for specific qualifications exert, through the medium of the secondary schools, stultifying pressures upon the primary school experience which substantially weaken or even remove the relevance which a six- to eight-year education programme could have for rural life in developing societies. This argument, then, challenges a major premise of educational policy in most societies: that primary education in the form that it exists at present, is needed for its own sake.

In various ways, these criticisms of primary education are not new. Indeed, even going back several decades, it is possible to find exhortations in education reports to the effect that curriculum change must be made a

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(1) Unesco, Educational development : world and regional statistical trends and projections until 1985, a background paper prepared for the World Population Conference, Bucharest, 1974.

priority throughout the developing world.(1) What is new, however, is the framework of analysis within which these judgements are now being made. In part, the depressing results of attempts to innovate within educational curricula, together with a wider consciousness of the complexity of and interconnexion between specific sectoral phenomena and relationships of exchange, ownership and production in the society as a whole have thrown emphasis upon possible causal relationships between the existence of large income differentials and associated employment practices on the one hand, and problems in the education sector on the other. For the first time, an understanding of some recurring educational problems is being sought from an analysis of the wider framework of society in general, and of the labour market in particular.

Theoretical frameworks have been developed which are capable of explaining the generally depressed results of attempts at educational innovation within the formal system. These variously stress the negative effects of the income structure, of employment and hiring practices, of the examination structure and achievement tests as being crucial pressure points which determine the nature of the schooling process and which are sufficient to protect that process unless all are affected together. Others stress not merely these phenomena as being the most important determinants of rigidities within the school system, but also the whole social context of development, consumerism and labelling, both in the world of products and of people. Advocates of the latter tend to argue for fundamental societal change, including de-schooling. Though neither group is homogeneous, those advocating the former stress the importance of co-ordinating social and educational reform at various levels if relevance and justice are to be achieved in the education system.(2)

Though theories do seem now to be close at hand, there is still a conspicuous lack of evidence as to which are the fundamental variables. Answers to the questions as to whether we should de-school, break the links between education and earnings, scrap examinations, transform the curriculum,

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(1) See, for example, U.K. Colonial Office, Memorandum on the education of African communities, London, 1935.

(2) For a summary of the main arguments and a bibliography of sources, see R.P. Dore et al, Qualification and selection in educational systems : a programme of research, IDS, Sussex, 1975 (Discussion Papers Nos. 70 and 71).

change existing hiring standards, or set up dual systems and alternative progression routes, separately or in some combination, still depend largely upon a mixture of ideology and gut-feeling - albeit tempered with a fair measure of relevant experience.

III. BASIC EDUCATION AND THE SEARCH FOR ALTERNATIVES

Parallel with this search for explanations and for the necessary and sufficient conditions for educational reform, there has developed a willingness on the part of some governments and aid agencies to spend a greater proportion of their budgets upon educational programmes developed outside the context of the school-university system, and upon age-groups who would normally be excluded from these institutions. Quite apart from the widespread international interest and emphasis placed upon the need for a greater use of traditional non-formal education programmes, including youth services, agricultural extension, co-operatives, vocational agricultural training and settlement schemes, national 'awareness' programmes using the mass media, and a range of others, a great deal of emphasis is currently being placed upon a concept which has come to be known as 'basic education' (B.E.). Though definitions vary, programmes collected under this heading would in various ways seek to teach primarily rural children and youth the basic knowledge considered to be relevant to their everyday lives, encompassing literacy and numeracy, knowledge required for running a household and bringing up a family, including health, nutrition and sanitation, and some functional skills. This is close to Unesco's 'fundamental education' concept, and is now termed by Coombs the 'minimum essential learning needs' for rural children and youth.(1)

It is envisaged that these minimum learning needs would vary according to conditions in different countries, and even between regions within one country. No one institution could serve all B.E. needs but it is argued that it is clear that they cannot, at any rate, be served by a simple expansion of the existing system. New institutions and educational programmes would need to be developed to provide a minimum relevant educational package to prepare rural children and youth for life in terms of playing defined economic and social roles.(2)

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(1) See P.H. Coombs, R.C. Prosser and M. Ahmed, New paths to learning for rural children and youth, International Council for Educational Development, 1973.

(2) Coombs, ibid., pp. 13-17.

The comments and analysis that follow relate to the notion of B.E. as defined above. Though this definition is still too broad to be of much use operationally, here we shall be more concerned with general principles than with a discussion of B.E. as it relates to specific and particular programmes. The most important features that would characterise our notion of B.E. can be summarized as follows: B.E. programmes would be shorter, and more closely related to local life and conditions than is traditional primary education; they would be established in parallel with primary education, and be available to children who do not have access to the latter, they would not, in general, function as a preparation for entrance to secondary school. We highlight quite deliberately the problem of creating dual systems of education, since this significant prescription appears to be implicit in much of the recent literature on B.E.(1) Similarly, we exclude from the main focus of our attention the range of other non-formal and B.E. programmes that are, or could be, offered to older youth and adults in the rural areas of developing countries. Though the latter programmes have obvious additional importance to a discussion of problems of rural education and employment, their treatment would require more space than is possible in this paper.

Recommendations for a new emphasis in rural education have arisen not only from what is seen as a crisis within education itself, but also from a more general awareness of the intractability of the unemployment problem within the context of policies that have been conventionally pursued.

Over the last decade the growth of modern sectors in developing countries typically has not absorbed more than a fraction of the available labour. The problem of unemployment has become more obvious particularly among:

- the young, due to their becoming a growing proportion of the total employable population. According to some estimates, the 15-25 age-group will almost double between 1968 and 1983;
- the urban population. Several studies have concluded that due to numerous factors (including, inter alia, the pattern of growth and education) the rates of expansion of urban and rural populations were very different in the past decade and are likely to remain so. Growth estimates are often in excess of 4-5 per cent per annum in urban areas as against less than 2 per cent in rural areas;

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(1) It should be noted that much of the analysis that follows would apply equally to B.E. programmes established in parallel with secondary education.

- the educated, whose number has been expanding at a very high rate. The demand for education has primarily been stimulated by the expectations of students and parents of earning more income through future employment in the modern sector. This is true for all levels of education though it is more developed for levels of post-primary schooling.

Whilst recognising the force of this gloomy picture, few specialists still believe that a further expansion of school and university enrolments, by itself, could do much to increase the number of formal sector job opportunities. It is widely hoped, however, that a change in the structure and content of education which a new approach to B.E. may be able to provide could allow and promote a more effective utilisation of labour in traditional agriculture and in rural and urban informal sectors.(1) This argument will be examined in more detail in later sections of this paper.

Secondly, as part of a welfare-orientated focus for educational expenditures, it is hoped that a concentration on B.E. will allow greater equity in the provision of educational facilities and opportunities than has been possible within the traditional formal educational system. A review of some possible arguments relating to equity is now appropriate, since the issues involved are more complex than they might seem at first:

- The main thrust of the equity argument centres upon the need to alter the overall allocation of educational resources in favour of the least privileged socio-economic groups in society. Though social rates of return, to the extent that these can be rigorously estimated, seem to be higher for primary than post-primary schooling, private rates of return reveal, in most cases, the opposite pattern. In these cases there is little justification for continued and increased subsidised access to secondary schools before UPE has been achieved. The resource constraint prevents the latter in many countries, hence B.E. is advocated as a cheaper and feasible alternative.

- Seeing B.E. merely as a partial substitute for primary education for those groups presently excluded from the latter would, given the privileged access to higher levels of education which the primary system allows,

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(1) One of the earlier and most convincing empirical studies was done by A. Callaway on Nigeria. See: A. Callaway, "Nigeria's indigenous education: the apprentice system", in ODU: Journal of African Studies (Institute of African Studies, University of Ife), Oxford University Press, Vol. 1, No. 1, July 1964.

merely institutionalise present inequalities. It is difficult to see how an argument based upon equity could support the entrenchment of a dual system which would confirm the present socio-economic status of those groups with access to B.E., as opposed to the formal education system. In this regard the thinking of some advocates appears less than rigorous. Fundamental doubts can also be raised about the practicality of such a system, as will become clear later.

- If one is really to affect the present regional, economic, and class privileges endemic in existing educational systems by the implementation of an alternative approach, one ought to take account not only of equality of access to the system, but also equality of social and economic opportunities arising after leaving it. This in principle raises the need to consider equalising work and income opportunities between regions, and putting more resources into the presently remote and deprived areas than into those that are at present relatively rich. This would imply a radical change in the present distribution of educational facilities, and is a prescription opposite to that suggested by some proponents of B.E.: that of a combination of primary schooling for the richer urban and rural areas, and the provision of B.E. facilities elsewhere.

In spite of the objections, on the grounds of principle or of practicality, that can be raised to the implicit theoretical framework within which arguments for basic education have been popularly advanced, there has arisen a feeling that progress need not await the results of more research on the problems of the formal educational system. It is clear that it is not achieving, particularly in the primary sector, what had earlier been hoped. Thus something else, an alternative which is, if possible cheaper, should be tried. Evidence for this desire for action can be seen from an inspection of the future lending programme of the World Bank: that institution intends to increase the proportion of its total lending for primary and basic education from the 5 per cent achieved between 1963 and 1971 to 27 per cent between 1974 and 1978 (though it does stress the need for continued research if these funds are to be used effectively).(1)

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(1) Education Sector Working Paper, World Bank, 1974, pp. 51-54.

In the light of this new emphasis, of the search for alternatives, and of the willingness to commit substantial monies to experiments in B.E., it may be useful to draw together the conclusions of some empirical research we consider to be relevant to the attempt to develop new approaches to education. Through the insights that this work provides, we attempt to suggest what are the primary conditions which new approaches must satisfy if they are to be successful. In particular, it will be argued that the homage paid to B.E. in recent literature runs the risk of making the same mistakes and of containing the same false hopes as happened with the rapid expansion of primary education a decade or more ago.

IV. PRIMARY EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT - SOME EMPIRICAL RESULTS

There is an important distinction to make between the separate effects of the form and content of schooling. With regard to the primary span of education, there is some evidence to suggest that a disciplined environment, an introduction to books, at least making steps towards developing communication skills, and an introduction to life more typical of the modern sector, which are given in some measure by primary schools - independently of the amount of agricultural knowledge possessed - do have the effect of making farmers more receptive to modernisation. But the evidence also suggests that a similarly strong contribution can be made in this regard by the mass media and the extension services.(1) One should therefore be wary of begging important questions relating to the costs and possible negative effects of the form of primary schooling before concluding too much from these results.

Most studies, however, proxy the effects of both the form and the content by correlating years of schooling with output at various levels of sophistication, and in general, only weak relationships between years of primary schooling and levels of agricultural productivity emerge. Heijnen, for example, in his study of peasant farming in Mwanza District, Tanzania, found that even the experience of complete primary schooling amongst farmers seemed to have little positive effect upon their productivity.(2) There

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(1) See Bruce R. Harker, "The contribution of schooling to agricultural modernization : an empirical analysis", in P. Foster and J. Sheffield (eds.), World Yearbook of Education, 1974, Evan Brothers, London, 1973.

(2) J.D. Heijnen, Development and education in the Mwanza District, Tanzania, a case study of migration and peasant farming, Amsterdam, Centre for the Study of Education in Changing Societies, Amsterdam and University of Utrecht, 1968.

appears to be evidence from India, using data at a high degree of aggregation that levels of agricultural output at the state and district levels are positively correlated with the educational level of the labour force.(1) But it is difficult at this level of aggregation to correct for co-linearities, and it is perhaps significant that data analysed at the household level as part of the same study revealed no significant relationships. Similarly, studies reported by Watts from Uganda and Kenya reveal conflicting results: whilst progressive farmers in Embu District, Kenya, had a very wide range of educational backgrounds, in Uganda there appeared to be a positive correlation between years of schooling, income and other factors relating to the propensity to use progressive farming methods.(2)

The evidence from these and other studies, therefore, is mixed. On the one hand, it cannot yet be claimed that primary schooling generally contributes significantly to rural productivity. On the other hand, the results from most studies would be consistent with the hypothesis that many variables can affect agricultural output: each could provide a constraint on development, but the removal of one bottleneck without ensuring that others are relieved will not necessarily result in an increase in production. It may be the case that the more interesting question is whether or not primary schooling contributes to agricultural productivity and 'under what conditions can it do so'. In a study of five areas of Brazil, for example, Patrick and Kehrberg(3) show that in this case though the links between schooling and value added in agriculture were weak (and negative in most cases) a positive association was discernible in those areas where more modern agricultural technologies were being used. This distinction may be worthy of further empirical research.

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(1) D.P. Chaudri, "Rural education and agricultural development - some empirical results from Indian agriculture", in World Yearbook of Education, 1974, op.cit.

(2) E. Ronald Watts, "The educational needs of farmers in developing countries", ibid.

(3) George F. Patrick and Earl W. Kehrberg, "Costs and returns of education in five agricultural areas in Eastern Brazil", in American Journal of Agricultural Economics, Vol. 55, No. 2, May 1973.

However, two further points should be made. Firstly, even in cases where a positive association is revealed, great care should be taken before imputing the notion of casuality. The results in most cases would still be consistent with the view that the farmers born into a rich family were more likely to be sent to school and to be given a larger resource base when they began to farm than those with poor parents. Schooling, then, may be more a result of earlier high levels of productivity than a cause of present levels. Secondly, and more importantly, the implications for policy of this kind of research may in any case be trivial. In the content of current debates, it is less important to know what are the effects of primary schooling on productivity than to know how the effects compare with those of alternative types of organised learning systems, including literacy programmes, extension, non-formal and basic education approaches. We believe that much could be gained by shifting the focus of research to a more comparative approach.

Though its effects upon rural output remain uncertain, it is clear that primary schooling does much to raise aspirations. In a detailed study of the importance of primary education to the communities in Mwanza District, Tanzania, which included interviews with a small sub-sample of parents of primary school children in that area, Dubbledam concludes that it is the tremendous contrast between the richness of urban life, and the material and cultural limitations of rural life that provides the main motivation for parents in sending their children to primary school.(1) For the pupils, aspirations existing even before they went to school were strengthened throughout school years by learning a new way of life, turning the youths away from the rural economy. Though there were differences between urban and rural families, in general, school was considered by parents to be an investment that would eventually yield some profit. This for the most part implied a wish for their children to go to town where the best profits lay. Primary school, moreover, was viewed only as the means whereby to secure entrance to secondary school which gave access to urban employment opportunities. There was evidence, however, of a real ambivalence in parents'

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(1) L.F.B. Dubbledam, The primary school and the community in Mwanza District, Tanzania, Centre for the Study of Education in Changing Societies, The Hague, Netherlands, 1970, see particularly pp. 148-152.

attitudes here: on the one hand, parents wanted a purely academic curriculum to maximise the chances of their children's selection to secondary school. In the event of non-selection, however, parents would have preferred the inclusion of some practical knowledge about farming or a trade, thereby making it less likely that the youth would have to return to subsistence farming.

Similar results have been obtained from attitudinal surveys among primary school children in Kenya. Though Anderson(1) found economic reasons to be more prevalent to the motives of expatriate children for attending school than in those of Africans, Koff's work among Standard 7 pupils in Kenya(2) shows that the fact that education can provide access to a job is of primary importance to the children in undertaking education. There is additional evidence from New Guinea(3) and from Ceylon(4) which shows the dominance of economic motives in explaining the educational participation of primary school students.

It is also fairly well documented that the influence of primary education aggravates the unemployment problem by transforming a condition of under-utilisation of labour in the rural areas to one of open unemployment in the towns. Studies of rural-urban migrants confirm that income expectations dominate the motives for migration, and that it is the better educated rural people who migrate most frequently. Some would argue that this motivation is not increased by education, but is merely the result of a realistic appraisal of their own chances in finding a job on the part of potential migrants and of aspirations existing before education was undertaken. Though this is clearly correct when considering people with some secondary as opposed to primary education, it is not clear that job opportunities in the urban or peri-urban areas are enhanced by possessing more rather than fewer years of

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(1) C.A. Anderson et al, Students, teachers and opportunity perceptions in Kenya, 1961-68, U.S. Department of Health and Welfare, 1970.

(2) D. Koff, "Education and employment, perspectives of Kenya primary schools", in J.R. Sheffield (ed.), Education, employment and rural development, East African Publishing House, Nairobi, 1966.

(3) J.D. Conroy, "The private demand for education in New Guinea : consumption or investment", in Economic record, December 1970.

(4) J.E. Jayasuriya, "Some studies of early school leaving in Ceylon", in Ceylon Journal of Historical and Social Studies, Vol. 3, No. 1, 1960.

primary education. In a sample survey undertaken in three peri-urban areas of Botswana, for example, in which over 90 per cent of the surveyed population were rural-urban migrants, it was found that the amount of education possessed by these migrants was on average significantly greater than the education possessed by the national population.(1) Migrancy was significantly biased towards groups with higher levels of primary education. Furthermore, though there was found to be no identifiable relationship between the number of years of primary schooling possessed and the frequency of wage or self-employment, there was nevertheless a relationship between years of schooling and the frequency with which migrants sought paid employment. Thus, though education seemed to influence the number of people who wanted to work, differences in the number of years spent in primary school seemed not to be an important determinant of whether or not people found it.

Since so few primary school students can succeed in obtaining a place in secondary school and since it is this institution rather than the primary school itself which now allows progression to formal sector employment, the pressures upon secondary entrance are very intense. This distorts the content of education, particularly in the last years of primary school. The possibilities of relating the subject matter to local communities or to examples within reach of the pupil's own experience are swamped by the perceived need to pass examinations. King(2) shows how student pressures prevent subjects which are not to be examined from being taught effectively: the students know that to pass the examination, they have to absorb facts, and they prefer the teaching methods and books that can give them these facts quickly and directly - at the cost of achieving any real understanding of basic scientific and societal relationships. Additional evidence for and analysis of the ways in which these pressures work is given by Dore.(3)

There is then a fairly strong body of evidence which shows that the popular demand for increased primary schooling is as strong as it is because it represents the one way in which poor rural people, through the medium of

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(1) A social and economic survey in three peri-urban areas in Botswana, C.S.O., Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, Gaborone, 1974.

(2) K. King, Primary schools in Kenya : some critical constraints on their effectiveness, I.D.S., Nairobi (Discussion Paper No. 130).

(3) R. Dore, Pre-vocational studies : a comment on recent developments in Ceylonese education, I.D.S., Sussex, 1973 (Discussion Paper No. 13).

the secondary school, can gain access to the formal employment sector of the economy. And it is clear they will resist pressures for changing the system in a way which would not continue to serve these purposes. In spite of long and significant efforts to introduce relevance into primary school curricula, this has not been successful nor popularly supported, since it represents a digression from the main function of the school as it is perceived by the consumers. In one important sense, the more the curriculum is oriented towards rural life and work, the less likely it is that children studying it will achieve their aims of secondary school entrance. It is this important fact - that people will only use educational institutions and undergo educational programmes when it suits their own basic objectives and purposes - that we seek to identify and to emphasise. Even within the context of traditional primary schooling there is evidence that people do not wish to participate in it when it is shown not to be helpful in furthering their long-term social and economic aims.(1) It is precisely because the aims of planners and administrators, in wanting to innovate within the context of the existing primary school system, have been different from the aims of the parents and children who use the schools (and different also from the purposes that the school successfully serves) that such attempts in the past have generally failed. The relationship between primary schooling and levels of rural productivity remains ambiguous, but it is clear that in many areas the absence of other inputs is a more crucial constraint. Where this is so, it becomes entirely rational for the users of the school to exploit it for that which it can do - namely to provide, even though for a minority, access to formal job opportunities. Even if the methods for achieving these aims were not entirely conflicting, as some authors appear to believe(2), it seems that the preferred aim would exert the dominant pressure, which would be reflected as the primary focus for what was taught, and how it was taught within the schools.

V. BASIC EDUCATION - THE LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE

The basic questions which emerge, then, with regard to meeting criticisms of the formal educational system discussed above, are firstly, whether non-formal and in particular B.E. programmes provide a way of

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(1) See particularly K. King, "Development and education in the Narok District of Kenya", in African Affairs, Vol. 17, No. 285, 1972.

(2) See, for example, Philip Foster and James Sheffield, "General Introduction", World Yearbook of Education, 1974, op.cit.

decreasing the inequalities inherent in historical patterns of educational expenditures, and secondly, whether they provide a vehicle whereby the content of the learning process and its associated social and economic effects is not heavily influenced or distorted by universal aspirations for, and the formalised requirements of, modern sector employment. We ask these questions in the context of the actual situation of acute privilege and inequalities in most developing societies, rather than in the context of an ideal world in which the strong institutional links between the formal education sector and the labour market, as discussed above, have already been broken down. It is for this contingent reason that we consider that arguments concerning the employment creation aspects of education, and arguments concerning the removing of inequalities, are inextricably linked.

In practice, an enormous diversity of non-formal educational programmes have been implemented throughout the developing world over many decades. The objectives and characteristics of these programmes have differed so widely that it is almost impossible to derive typologies for the purposes of generalisation. It is possible to distinguish some schemes which are more specifically related to aims of employment creation, or more usually, of a more effective utilisation of labour, than are others. But it could be argued that these aims are contained, explicitly or implicitly in all such schemes. Even from the point of view of programme content, an accurate representation of different approaches would be one of a continuum - from programmes with a narrow vocational skill orientation to those which primarily aim to achieve basic literacy and numeracy. Within the continuum it becomes impossible to characterise programmes as belonging exclusively to one or the other group.

However, analysis has been considerably assisted in the recent past by the wider availability of evaluations of a large number of non-formal education projects.(1) On the basis of these evaluations it does appear possible and useful to make some broad, though tentative, remarks concerning the efforts of such programmes on people's welfare and productivity in rural areas.

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(1) Easily the most useful of these and on which we have drawn heavily is M. Ahmed and P.H. Coombs (eds.), Education for rural development : case studies for planners, Praeger Publishing, New York, 1975.

Though in the context of a paper such as this a presentation of all the relevant evidence is not possible, it does now appear to be clear that many educational programmes organised outside the formal school system have affected people's behaviour to their advantage. The evidence from agricultural extension efforts in many different countries is that rural productivity can be increased by using extension methods provided the supply of other resources (credit, fertilizers, irrigation, etc.) is not acting as the crucial constraint. Good progress has also been made recently in training managers and owners of small businesses, using extension methods(1), with significant positive effects upon their productivity. Similarly adult education campaigns using the mass media and with a fairly small amount of student contact time have been shown in some circumstances to be capable of significantly affecting the behaviour and awareness of rural people.(2) At a different organisational level, the structured training which takes place by a mixture of non-formal and informal on-the-job methods for trades in rural and peri-urban areas using technology characterised by a very small degree of capitalisation is important to note. This indeed may have been, historically, the major way in which non-formal education has affected the welfare and productivity of rural people throughout the developing world.(3)

Many countries have also established vocational training centres providing basic training in low-level artisan and other skills diagnosed as being needed in the rural areas. This, however, is one area where a

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(1) See particularly M. Harper, "An approach to the training of extension workers", in World development, Vol. 3, Nos. 2 & 3, February-March 1975, who reports on an interesting and successful experiment in Kenya in which secondary school leavers were trained as extension agents and advisors for small-scale businessmen in the rural areas. For an analysis of Indian experience in this area, see J.C. de Wilde, "India : non-formal education in the development of small enterprise", in M. Ahmed and P.H. Coombs (eds.), Education for rural development : case studies for planners, op.cit.

(2) In Tanzania, for example, the recent health campaign resulted in some 700,000 latrines being built in villages. See B.L. Hall and A. Zikompandi, Evaluation of Mtu Nu Afya Campaign, Institute of Adult Education, Dar es Salaam, 1974.

(3) See the insightful discussions of traditional training methods given by K. King, The African artisan, Centre for African Studies, University of Edinburgh, March 1975 and A. Callaway, Nigerian enterprise and the employment of youth, Nigerian Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Ibadan, March 1973.

distinction between formal and non-formal education is weak - often the only difference between these institutions and formal vocational training institutes is that they have a lower unit cost. Often the students from both take the same government trade-tests and in many cases use their training as a means of obtaining a skilled or semi-skilled job in the modern sector (vide: the Botswana Brigades, the Kenya Village Polytechnics, the Thailand Mobile Trade Training Schools). The distinctive feature about these approaches to rural education is the 'training technology' used. But in spite of the minimal capital provision, the mixture of training with productive work, the ideological education content and the explicitly rural focus of the training programmes, there has often been a disappointingly small effect upon the urban orientation of students who qualify.(1) Though it might be argued that this is primarily caused by the qualifications gained by trade-testing, in fact, in the Botswana case, with or without a certificate, employers preferred to take on a youth with experience in construction brigades than a primary school leaver: the brigade experience itself became an accreditation in its own right and became thus a part of the formal job-certification system.(2) In this connexion, it is an intriguing irony that the success of the brigade movement has often been judged in terms of the number of brigade graduates who have succeeded in finding jobs in the modern sector.

It is precisely this kind of pressure that thorough-going attempts at B.E. will find it most difficult to withstand. Even though the curriculum may be very different from that of the primary schools, though there may be no certification of graduates, though the costs may be lower and facilities less extant than in the primary school system, it will be difficult to resist the pressures on such a system to serve the same purpose as the primary schools.

Lessons along these lines from countries in which such programmes have been run are now beginning to emerge. In Afghanistan, for example, the so-called 'village schools' are intended to provide basic education for up to three years. They are established, using local efforts, and gradually build up to a three-year student population. But once they have children

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(1) See particularly P. Van Pensburg, Report from Swaneng Hill, Uppsala, 1974 and Report on the brigade system in Botswana, SIDA, 1974.

(2) These remarks are made on the basis of interviews by one of the present authors with personnel officers of the main construction companies in Botswana in 1972.

who begin to graduate from Grade 3, they are generally transformed into traditional primary schools. Guatemala is planning to introduce the 'module system' on a pilot basis in the Altiplano - a system of education which is intended to co-exist with traditional primary schooling. Nepal has already changed the structure of its school system by reducing the length of its primary schooling from 5 years to 3 years. The experiment, however, is not yet old enough for lessons to be drawn. There is, however, the case of Upper Volta, on which it would be useful to focus attention. Its Rural Education Centres have been established since the late fifties and the project has received interest in its exemplifying - on paper at least - a project with features that some advocates of B.E. would wish to see replicated elsewhere.(1)

The project, established in 1959, essentially envisaged a dual system of education, whereby primary schools should be given the principal role of providing education for those few who would go on to secondary school, and ultimately form the nation's élite, whilst everyone else would be given three years of agricultural vocational training combined with basic literacy and numeracy training for effective work in agriculture, and for a literate adult life. The latter broadly-based, vocationally orientated education programme was to begin for children aged 14 or 15, in order to allow greater receptivity and motivation amongst the students, and in order to begin at an age when students were closer to embarking upon their productive lives, than if the age-group were the same as that for primary school. The expansion of primary education was to be halted and most additional resources for education after 1970 were to be used for the extension of the rural education system, since it seemed clear that the formal sector of the economy could be serviced by a comparatively small formal school system. Though there has been a significant expansion of rural education centres (RECs) to encompass a total enrolment of 24,000 in 1973, this is, however, only about one-sixth of what was planned. On the other hand, the primary school system has continued to expand steadily and to get the lion's share of the educational budget.

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(1) An excellent report on an evaluation of the scheme is given by I.E.D.E.S. (University of Paris) and S. Grabe, "Upper Volta : A rural alternative to primary schools", in M. Ahmed and P.H. Coombs (eds.), Education for rural development : case studies for planners, op.cit.

In order to understand the reasons for the difficulties encountered in expanding the RECs, it is worth taking note of a crucial paragraph in the evaluation report:

> "What really happened was, of course, very different from intention. The number of new RECs remained well below the number planned and became almost frozen after 1968, while primary schools continued to be expanded in the cities and towns at a steady pace, although it was an accepted fact that the blessings of the primary school could be extended to only a small fraction of the children. Indeed, it remained a highly-selective institution, ruthlessly pruning the number of participants, granting a small proportion the privilege of completing the six-year course, and opening up for them the prospects of further educational opportunities and the rewards of white-collar occupations. A student in the REC, on the other hand, irrespective of his talents and ambitions, had little chance of transferring to the formal system and claiming a stake in the perquisites associated with it. Moreover, the proclaimed objectives of the REC, in most cases, were not fully achieved. Parents of rural youths and the youths themselves, of course, clearly saw what was happening and regarded the REC, at best, as a temporary expedient that should be replaced by the real thing, the primary school, and at worst, a symbol of discrimination against the rural people. In fact, as the IEDES investigation has revealed, parents continued to hope that the REC would be converted to a regular primary school and tried to send primary school age children to the REC. But when after a three-year cycle the REC was not converted into a primary school, the villagers' hopes were shattered and new REC recruitment efforts faced increasing resistance from the villagers."(1)

On technical grounds the REC programme has been reasonably effective. Basic literacy and numeracy were acquired by a sizeable number of REC students - though obviously not as effectively as in the primary schools where the course lasted twice as long. In addition, basic agricultural skills were acquired which almost certainly improved the students' future effectiveness in their villages. Nevertheless, in a large number of cases it appears that the skills learnt could not be effectively used since villagers were typically not rich enough to afford the equipment, tools and fertilizers that would have been needed for the introduction and application of the new technique.

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(1) IEDES and S. Grabe, "Upper Volta : a rural alternative to primary schools", in M. Ahmed and P.H. Coombs (eds.), Education for rural development : case studies for planners, op.cit., p. 354.

It appears that a lack of knowledge was not the only constraint upon levels of rural productivity and the effectiveness of the education programme was, therefore, heavily circumscribed by these other factors. In circumstances where the REC programme remained incapable of contributing as much as had been hoped to improving the lives of farmers and rural residents, and failed also to open the door to the modern sector of the economy (as was seen to happen for at least a segment of those staying in the formal school system for long enough), it is perhaps not surprising that the programme has now begun to collapse. The dual system of education came to stand as a symbol of discrimination, and failed to win the acceptance, confidence and support of rural people.

A number of lessons can be drawn from this experience, and from the earlier analysis contained in this paper:

(1) Criticisms of the present system of primary education that stress its small contribution to levels of rural productivity and welfare in comparison with what might reasonably be expected from six to eight years of full-time education, appear soundly based. But in spite of these disappointing results, powerful political and social forces can be expected to continue to reinforce the goal of UPE in the context of the existing status quo. This, since the reasons for which wider access to primary schooling are so strongly demanded, are different, and arise from the perceived opportunities for economic and social mobility that primary education provides.

(2) In our discussion of rural education we have concentrated our attention upon the primary system, and upon its currently conceived alternative - basic education. The reasons for this focus are that primary education is at present the single most important vehicle for bringing education to rural populations, whilst B.E. is seen by many as being its more effective alternative, both on grounds of equity and of its potential social and economic benefits. It is clear that in general non-formal education programmes can provide a means of reducing inequalities inherent in earlier patterns of educational investment, and that they have important political, social and economic roles in affecting the pattern of people's behaviour and levels of consciousness. More research is needed concerning their wider applicability in poor countries as vehicles for change both within different political contexts and as substitutes and complements to traditional educational systems. Having said this, however, it should now be clear that the implicit framework of analysis within which recent

discussions of B.E. have emerged is unsatisfactory, and contains important conceptual and practical problems. In particular, it appears that the establishment of dual systems of primary and basic education would tend to institutionalise present inequalities, would be unlikely to be acceptable to rural populations in the medium- to long-term, and would be unlikely to have significant effects upon rural productivity and welfare. If these aims were to be achieved, experience would suggest, at minimum, the need for a single unified system of B.E., through which all children would pass.

(3) In designing new educational programmes the crucial question will be whether the aims and objectives of the planners and educators are the same as those of the recipients of the proposed programmes. Even if the aims are the same, or overlap to some degree, the question then becomes one of the extent to which people are prepared to participate in order to achieve these aims. The matching of these different perspectives will be a major determinant of the success or failure of most non-formal education schemes. But it becomes particularly important (and difficult) in cases where such schemes require full-time participation by students over a period of several years. It will, therefore, be a particularly important consideration in designing B.E. programmes.

It is not clear that the significance of these lessons has been recognised in recent discussions of basic education. Unless their implications are properly considered, there appears to be a strong likelihood of significant educational investments being made in new and different schemes and areas, but which fail to measure up to expectations in the same way, and for the same reasons, as has happened in the past.

VI. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

The preceding analysis points to the need to take account of individual motivations when designing alternative educational strategies. Existing links between the schools and formal sector employment are so powerful in most poor countries that they can undermine attempts at educational innovation that are essentially partial, and that leave the existing school-university system untouched. In a narrow, economic sense, this implies that the power of private rates of return should not be overlooked as a possible obstacle to projects conceived on the basis of social discount analysis. The diagnosis of the constraints on educational reform in particular situations thus becomes an important aspect of the planning process. Though we remain clear that general lessons can be learned from international

experience, it seems equally true that the search for a panacea, whether fashionably called 'basic education', or otherwise, is misguided. The crucial variables - wage differentials, techniques of production, the size of the formal sector and its rate of growth, the growth of rural and urban populations, the size of the labour surplus, employment and technological conditions in agriculture and others - vary widely from country to country. These differences can be expected to have different implications for attempts at educational innovation. One of the more important results of a more specific emphasis on diagnosis in particular countries may be the conclusion that fundamental educational change may not be possible in many societies without a significant change in the existing structure of economic and social relationships - and particularly in the incentives structure that directly links the education sector to the labour market.

With these caveats in mind, then, we can ask what general lessons can be drawn for future experiments with B.E., as defined earlier in this paper, in the Third World. The introduction of B.E. programmes can be seen as a wish to promote a more effective use of educational resources, or as a way of achieving more equality of opportunity (for work and income) among the population, or as both.

In the first case, the challenge for decision-makers is to choose between expanding the primary (and post-primary) school system, or developing B.E. as a better way for preparing students for the kind of life and livelihood that most of them will have. But as the previous sections have shown, very little is as yet known about the comparative cost and effectiveness of traditional education compared with B.E. Indeed there are reasons to suspect, firstly, that only under some stringent conditions is B.E. likely to appear less costly than traditional primary education; and secondly, that only if other adequate measures accompany B.E. schemes, e.g. credit systems in rural areas, action on income distribution, adequate systems of communication, etc., is B.E. likely to appear more beneficial in terms of its effects upon productivity and employment.

To a significant extent, however, we believe that the potential positive effects of new B.E. schemes in rural areas will depend very largely upon whether governments establish dual educational structures. In a simple model in which dual socio-economic structures are maintained, it is conceivable that two school systems could co-exist, each 'specialising' in serving one sector of the economy; for example, B.E. could be envisaged as

being particularly adapted to training in the informal sector and in the rural non-monetary sector; whereas traditional education could continue to produce the type of labour required by the modern, urban, rich sector. However, even in such a hypothetical context, it would be an oversimplification to represent reality in terms of such a total separatism between the two sectors and the two systems; in fact, a continuous range of training schemes appears to exist between the highly-formal traditional educational system and the widely-used, and probably highly-significant informal on-the-job education systems. Where B.E. fits within this range is a matter for interpretation.

Yet, in the context of overcoming the forces which are at play in the dualistic economy - differences in wages and incomes, in investments, in social services, in infrastructure, and in productive investment, between the 'centre' and the 'periphery' - a policy seeking to maintain two school systems (traditional and B.E.) is likely to be impotent. Some would argue that the two educational systems cut across the two sectors and do not contribute to their separation; but the argument and evidence presented in this paper seem to show just the opposite. In this context, we would argue that policy-makers would better seek to restructure the whole school system, replacing existing primary schools by a network of B.E. institutions and radically altering resource allocation in favour of B.E., particularly in the rural areas. This means that the notion of 'rural education' can be seriously questioned if it is to be opposed to 'urban education'. The temptation to differentiate within the education system should not lead to offering partial solutions to problems which require a comprehensive approach encompassing all girls and boys, in all regions and for all socio-economic groups. Quite apart from the equity arguments, partial solutions in this context appear, on the evidence available, to be very likely to fail. We do recognise that enormous difficulties and resistance are likely to arise in the implementation of these policies, and that indeed their implementation may only be possible with the backing of a political system which most countries do not at this stage possess.

In the second case the challenge is more fundamental for decision-makers, in as much as it raises the general issue of the relationships between education and employment. Seen from this perspective, it is not sufficient to provide equal conditions of schooling (in terms of facilities, equipment, staff, etc.) but it also becomes important to provide some kind

of equality in the educational output and in the chances of finding employment among various socio-economic groups and geographical areas. Though these criteria would be ambitious for any government to adopt, it is by no means clear that the introduction of B.E. programmes would bring most countries any closer to achieving such goals.

Firstly, under certain circumstances the introduction of B.E. could actually be regressive. It may be better not to develop B.E. and thereby leave some groups of the population without education, than to justify it on the basis of some education being better than none. This would be so in cases where B.E., though introduced on the grounds of equalising opportunities, turns out to be a means for legitimising the existing class structures of the society.

Secondly, we as yet know very little about the potential effects of B.E. on levels of rural output. In spite of this, many advocates of B.E. programmes see these as a means of increasing the productivity of rural people in a way in which the primary schools, for example, seem to have failed. In practice, most primary school leavers at present enter the labour market, and do not in fact progress to higher levels of the education system, as would also be the case for B.E. leavers. An important empirical question is, then, how the two formulae of schooling compare in terms of productivity, possibility of future employment, and other social and economic effects. As yet, very few comparative data are available, and some tracer surveys would be useful to assess the comparative effects of B.E. and traditional primary institutions. On the other hand, earlier sections of this paper have shown that such studies will have to deal with some significant theoretical obstacles, owing to the fact that productivity depends upon a wide range of variables. In particular, it will be important to recognise that productivity is related to the technology used, and to cognitive and non-cognitive (attitude, motivation, etc.) characteristics of workers. The results of such studies, then, though of potential value to policy, will need to be interpreted with some care.

Thirdly, and more fundamentally, the assumptions made by those who hold a 'reductionist' view of the effects of education on employment can be questioned. It is an over-simplification to assume that the employment effects of one part of the education system - be it primary school, B.E., or non-formal programmes - are independent of those of other parts of the system. Measuring the productivity of workers at different educational

levels can provide a proxy for the effects of that education only within certain heavily defined parameters and constraints. Though such studies may provide evidence for the likely effects of optimising policies within the context of the existing status quo, they are of little help in indicating the effects of wider and more fundamental change within the education system as a whole. Worse still is the fact that both the measurable and non-measurable links between education and employment in most developing societies are inextricably related to contradictions prevailing today between what is learnt in schools, the expectations of the students, and the reality of the world of work. The emphasis upon educational innovation per se hides the nature of the real challenge (and accounts for the failure of many historic attempts at educational reform) - the need to achieve co-ordinated change in both education and the labour market. B.E. as well as other educational programmes should not be judged only in terms of their contribution to making the lottery work more equitably, but, more fundamentally, in terms of their contribution to altering the present reality of the labour market.

The final question, which must for the moment remain unanswered, is the extent to which changes in the education system can in fact contribute to this process. We have seen that partial approaches to educational change in rural areas are likely to fail. But there are those who believe that no matter how equitable a school system is, it cannot alter the inequalities existing in the socio-economic system, which will, in the end, dominate. However, the history of social systems does suggest that progress can be promoted when some degree of tension or contradiction exists between various institutions in society. It seems likely, for example, that the attitude of youth nowadays towards work and employment, and the growing importance of demands for changing the conditions of work by unions, are in part the result of an increasing imbalance between what is happening in the schools and what is occurring at work. There may, then, be grounds for optimism in cases where a comprehensive approach to reform is adopted. In addition to the needed changes in curricula, the target of achieving equity of access, provision and opportunity in first-level education in developing countries, may well promote the kind of framework that would make other changes possible. Thus, the issues of employment and equity are more subtly connected than is often supposed, and the goal of reducing the labour surplus is likely to be better served by aiming at equity within

the education system, than by setting up tailor-made general educational facilities designed to prepare different groups of people for different ways of life, whether in the rural or urban areas, the formal or informal sectors, in modern industry, or for life on the land.